History and Evolution of the ILR Translation and Interpretation Committee

Dr. Maria M. Brau

ILR T&I Committee Meeting

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Overview

- **Background**
  - 1999: T&I SIG established
  - 2001: T&I SIG becomes a Committee
    - Concentrates on developing Skill Level Descriptions
      - 2005: ILR SLDs for Translation Performance
      - 2007: ILR SLDs for Interpretation Performance
      - 2011: ILR SLDs for Audio Translation Performance
  - 2011 to present:
    - Scheduling presentations
    - Reaching out to outside organizations
Background: 1975-1985

- 1975: Final version of Proficiency SLDs completed
- 1985: Office of Personnel Management declares the ILR SLDs as the official standard for measuring language proficiency in the USG
- ILR minutes do not record any discussion of translation/interpretation
- Given English as the native language, single skills tests in the foreign language were used to identify translation/interpreting ability

Reference:

- Reading SLDs: “The word ‘read,’ in the context of these proficiency descriptions, means that the person at a given skill level can thoroughly understand the communicative intent in the text-types described. In the usual case the reader could be expected to make a full representation, thorough summary, or translation of the text in English.”
- Speaking SLDs Level 4: “Can serve as an informal interpreter in a range of unpredictable circumstances.”

If used, translation tests consisted of one or more passages, ratings were based on number of errors expressed in ILR terms
Background: 1985-mid-nineties

- 1987 - James Child (NCA)/Pardee Lowe (CIA) article
  - the “combined skills” merit separate consideration
  - “congruity judgment” term used for the first time

- Marijke van der Heide (FBI)
  - Led ILR informal meetings on translation
  - Agency does not have a language school
  - Foreign language is native language of most applicants
  - 1992/1996 “ILR” three SLDs for Translation are developed
  - 2 sets of English-Spanish, Spanish-English TTs “yield” ratings on ILR scale

- Glenn Nordin (DOD)
  - Led ILR informal meetings on translation
  - Society of Federal Linguists/ATA
Late Nineties to 2001

- 1996 - James Child “ILR SLDs Translation (Congruity Judgment) published
- 1996-1999 - NCA/CIA/FBI informal meetings on translation at DLI
- Summer 1999 -
  - Meeting: FSI Dean, Glenn Nordin, Rick Jackson
    - Plan to increase ILR attendance
      - FSI to develop/host e-mail list to disseminate information
      - Committees to allow contractors to participate
    - Establish a Translation and Interpretation SIG
- September 1999
  - Rick Jackson becomes ILR Coordinator
    - Establishes T&I SIG, to meet at the same time as the Testing and Training Committees
    - Appoints SIG Chair: Glenn Nordin; Co-Chair: (1) Ted Crump (2) Maria Brau
2001 to 2005

- September 1999 to June 2001
  - SIG works on “Translation Performance Notes”
    - Modification of various items from the Congruity Judgment Proficiency SLDs
  - Examples:
    - Translation involves performance, not proficiency
    - Below Level 3, non-professional performance
    - Top down presentation (5 to 0 instead of 0 to 5)

- September 2001
  - SIG becomes a Committee
  - Congruity Judgment SLDs and Translation Performance Notes presented to the full ILR but not approved
  - Charge: develop SLDs for Translation
  - Sub-Committee formed to develop Translation SLDs
2001 to 2005

- **T&I Sub-Committee Members:**
  - Maria Brau, chair (FBI)
  - Kathleen Diamond (industry)
  - Pardee Lowe (NCS)
  - Karen Manna (Homeland Security)
  - Teresa Salazar (US Courts)
  - David Sawyer (State)

- **Sub-C meets regularly once a month at Salazar’s office**
2001 to 2005

- **Sub-C process:**
  - Chair prepares preliminary draft based on Translation Performance Notes for discussion by Sub-C
  - Discussion produces suggestions for modifications
  - Chair prepares new draft incorporating approved modifications
  - New draft presented to full T&I Committee at next ILR meeting for comment
  - Discussion produces suggestions for modifications
  - Chair prepares new draft incorporating approved modifications
  - New draft presented to Sub-C for discussion
- Process repeated from September 2001 to December 2004
- Presented to full ILR January 13/21/24 2005
- Approved by ILR February 4 2005/ posted June 2005
Episodes

- State Department Meeting
  - Joe Mazza:
    - Quality control at all levels
  - Shuckran Kamal:
    - “that does not contain figurative language, complex sentence structures, embedding, or instances of syntactic or semantic skewing.”

- Other:
  - Rick Jackson: “for use by managers” modified to “for use in government settings.”
  - Suggestions from the floor
2005 to 2011

- 2005: T&I Sub-Committee undertakes development of Interpretation SLDs
- Sub-C membership remains the same
- Process remains the same
  - Note: Salazar and Sawyer assume leading roles
- December 2005: First Draft of Interpretation SLDs
- By June 2006: 9 additional drafts presented
- 2007: Interpretation SLDs approved

- Note:
  - September 2006: Rick Jackson retires
  - Scott McGinnis becomes Coordinator
2006 to 2011

- 2008: Work begins on Audio Translation
  - T&I Sub-Committee no longer active
  - T&I Co-Chair undertakes task with FBI Personnel
  - Originally called “Monitoring”
- 2010: Joe Mazza (State) joins
  - Name change: Audio Translation
- 2010-2011
  - 7 drafts prepared
  - Final posting draft: May 2011
2011 to 2016
Evolution

- T&I SLD projects finished
- Committee shifts to:
  - Schedule presentations at meetings
  - Concentrates on outreach
    - example: continues to build ties to ATA
2011 to 2016
Evolution: Co-Chairs

- 2011: Pardee Lowe retires as co-chair of the T&I Committee
- 2012: Teresa Salazar becomes co-chair
- 2015: Nathaniel Hancock becomes co-chair
- 2016: David Sawyer becomes co-chair of T&I Committee
- 2017: Maria Brau retires as co-Chair
- 2017: Amanda Curry (FBI) becomes Co-chair
2016 to -

- T&I Committee will continue to evolve and become the focal point for Translation and Interpretation in the USG ...
References:
